

Collins English Library Level 2

THE
CANTERVILLE
GHOST
OSCAR WILDE

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Collins English Library

Series editors: K R Cripwell and Lewis Jones

A library of graded readers for students of English as a second or foreign language, and for reluctant native readers. The books are graded in six levels of difficulty. Structure, vocabulary, idiom and sentence length are all controlled according to principles laid down in detail in *A Guide to Collins English Library*. A list of the books follows. Numbers after each title indicate the level at which the book is written: 1 has a basic vocabulary of 300 words and appropriate structures, 2 : 600 words, 3 : 1000 words, 4 : 1500 words, 5 : 2000 words and 6: 2500 words.

<i>Inspector Holt and the Fur Van</i>	John Tully	1
<i>Where is Bill Ojo?</i>	John Tully	1
<i>Crocodile!</i>	K R Cripwell	1
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<i>Tin Lizzie</i>	Jane Homeshaw	1
<i>Dead in the Morning</i>	Jane Homeshaw	1
<i>Letters from the Dead</i>	Jane Homeshaw	1
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<i>Oliver-Twist</i>	Charles Dickens	2
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<i>The Gunshot Grand Prix</i>	Douglas Rutherford	3

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<i>Cinema Stunts</i>	K R Cripwell	3
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<i>Three English Kings</i>	from Shakespeare	3
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<i>Six American Stories</i>	Norman Wymer	3
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<i>Maimunah</i>	David Hill	3
<i>Little Women</i>	Louisa M Alcott	3
<i>The Picture of Dorian Gray</i>	Oscar Wilde	3
<i>The White South</i>	Hammond Innes	4
<i>Landslide</i>	Desmond Bagley	4
<i>Nothing is the Number when you Die</i>	Joan Fleming	4
<i>The Lovely Lady and Other Stories</i>	D H Lawrence	4
<i>King Solomon's Mines</i>	H Rider Haggard	4
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<i>Jane Eyre</i>	Charlotte Bronte	4
<i>Pride and Prejudice</i>	Jane Austen	4
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<i>Tiger</i>	Kailash Sankhala	4
<i>Airport International</i>	Brian Moynahan	4
<i>The Secret Sharer and Other Sea Stories</i>	Joseph Conrad	4
<i>Death in Vienna</i>	K E Rowlands	4
<i>Hostage Tower</i>	Alistair MacLean/John Denis	4
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<i>I Know my Love</i>	Catherine Gaskin	5
<i>The Wreck of the Mary Deare</i>	Hammond Innes	5
<i>The Eagle has Landed</i>	Jack Higgins	5
<i>Geordie</i>	David Walker	5
<i>Among the Elephants</i>	Iain and Oria Douglas-Hamilton	5
<i>The Mayor of Casterbridge</i>	Thomas Hardy	5
<i>Wuthering Heights</i>	Emily Bronte	5
<i>Sense and Sensibility</i>	Jane Austen	5
<i>Middlemarch</i>	George Eliot	5
<i>Victory</i>	Joseph Conrad	5
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<i>Japan: Islands in the Mist</i>	Peter Milward	5
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<i>The Glory Boys</i>	Gerald Seymour	6
<i>Harry's Game</i>	Gerald Seymour	6
<i>Inspector Grote Breaks an Egg</i>	H R F Keating	6
<i>Hard Times</i>	Charles Dickens	6
<i>In the Shadow of Man</i>	Jane Goodall	6
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<i>Vanity Fair</i>	William Thackeray	6

Chapter One

Lots of people laughed when Mr Hiram B Otis bought Canterville Chase. "He's an American," they said, "so perhaps he doesn't know about the ghost." But he did know about the ghost. Lord Canterville told him about it when Mr Otis bought the house.

"Do you believe dead people can come back to life again?" Lord Canterville asked.

"No sir, I do not."

"They can, you know. One of these ghosts is here in this house. Long ago, the ghost visited the Duchess of Bolton when she was here. Two hands touched her when she was alone in her room She's been afraid to live here since then. Many of my family have seen the ghost over the last three hundred years. And my wife, Lady, Canterville, can never sleep in the house because of his noise."

"Lord Canterville," answered Mr Otis, "I will buy the ghost with the house. I come from a

modern country. When we want a thing, we buy it. We've never had a real ghost in America before. Perhaps we can send it over there, and people will pay to see it."

"I'm sorry," said Lord Canterville with a smile, "but our ghost is real. He's been here for three hundred years. He always comes out when one of the family is going to die."

"The family doctor does the same, Lord Canterville. There are no ghosts in America and no ghosts in England either."

"Well, I don't know. Now don't forget my words."

A few weeks after this Hiram B Otis and his family went down by train to Canterville Chase. Mrs Otis was a very beautiful woman. Her oldest son, Washington, had light brown hair and was a very good dancer. Miss Virginia E Otis was a little girl of fifteen with a lovely face and big blue eyes. After Virginia came the two boys. They were born at the same time and their faces were alike. Like most boys of their age they were never still for a second.

Canterville Chase is ten kilometres from Ascot. The country is very beautiful in that part of England. The family drove to the house from the train. It was a lovely July evening. But as they arrived at Canterville Chase the sky suddenly became dark and stormy. The air was strangely still. Five or six big black birds flew



over the house as the first heavy drops of rain began to fall.

At the front door an old woman in a black dress met them. This was Mrs Umney, the housekeeper. She opened the door and they followed her inside. She took them to the library. It was a room with books on three sides. The Otis family had their tea there.

Suddenly Mrs Otis saw that part of the floor was red. "What's that?" she asked.

"It's blood," answered Mrs Umney in a low voice.

"I won't have blood on my floors," cried Mrs Otis. "It must go."

The old woman smiled and answered again in a low voice, "It is the blood of Lady Eleanore de Canterville. Her husband, Sir Simon, killed her while she stood there. He lived for nine years after he killed her. Then one day he was no more. The family looked for his body and they never found it. But his ghost is still in the house. Many people have seen the blood — it is famous now. It is not possible to wash the blood away and clean the floor."

"Pinkerton's Fast Cleaner will clean it up in a second," cried Washington Otis. And before Mrs Umney could say a word he sat down on the floor with a small black bottle in his hands. In a few minutes there was no more blood on the floor.

"There. What did I say? Pinkerton's has done it again!" said Washington. There was a very loud bang, and a great noise filled the room. They all jumped up and Mrs Umney fell to the ground.

"A storm, I suppose," said Mr Otis. "You do have bad weather in this country!"

"My dear Hiram," cried Mrs Otis, "what can we do about Mrs Umney? We can't leave her on the floor."

Mrs Umney sat up. She didn't seem happy. "You listen to me," she said. "Strange things are going to happen in this house very soon. Bad things. I've seen many of them here, and heard them too. I don't sleep at night. It's the ghost, you see, the ghost of Sir Simon. Just wait — you'll see!"

"Thank you, Mrs Umney, but we don't believe in ghosts," said Mr Otis. "Now go to bed and think no more of ghosts. Don't be afraid of a thing. In the morning I want to talk to you about your pay. You don't get enough."

Mrs Umney's eyes opened wide. "Goodnight to you all," the old woman cried as she went to her room.

"Goodnight," answered the family.



Chapter Two

All night it was stormy. But nothing else happened. The family came down the next morning and the blood was again on the floor in the library. "Pinkerton's always works," said Washington. "It must be the ghost." So he cleaned the floor once more with the little black bottle of Pinkerton's. But the second morning the blood was there again. That night Mr Otis closed the doors and windows of the library so nothing could get in. But in the morning the blood was there again. The whole family began to think a lot about the ghost. They still did not believe in ghosts. But that night changed things.

During the day the sun shone warmly. The family went for a drive and came back in the evening. They had a light supper at about nine o'clock. They talked about all kinds of things but said nothing about the ghost in the house. At eleven o'clock the family went to bed. And at half past eleven all the lights were out.

Some time later Mr Otis awoke. He could hear a strange noise outside his room. It was coming closer all the time. He got up and lit a match. He looked at his watch. It was one o'clock. He was not afraid. He put on his shoes and took a small bottle from his case. Then he opened the door.

In front of him in the moonlight he saw an old man. His eyes were red like fire. His long grey hair fell down his back and it did not seem very clean. His clothes were old and full of holes. There were long chains on his hands and feet.

"My dear sir," said Mr Otis. "You must put some oil on those chains. I've brought you a bottle of Tammany Sunshine Oil. Put it on and you won't hear another sound from those chains of yours. I'll leave it for you on this little table. Let me know when you want some more. I've got lots." With these words Mr Otis put the bottle down on the table. Then he went back to bed.

For a second, the ghost stood still. Then he let the bottle drop to the floor. With a low cry he began to run. A strange green light came from his body.

But as he ran, the door to the boys' room opened. Two small bodies in white came out and a large white thing flew past his head. The ghost escaped through the wall and the house became quiet again.



The ghost reached his room. He was very tired. He tried to think. "This is the first time," he thought. "I've never lost before." He remembered all the times when he won over the last three hundred years. He remembered the Duchess of Bolton and Lady Canterville and Mrs Umney and many others. He began to smile. "*They* never forgot me. They were all afraid of me." Then he remembered the Americans and the smile left his face. "They come here and want to give me oil for my chains. Things fly at my head. I must stop it. They can't do things like that to ghosts. Not to a real ghost like me! They'll be sorry. Just you wait and see!"

Chapter Three

The next morning the family talked about the ghost.

“I don’t want to hurt the ghost, and you two boys mustn’t try to hurt him either,” Mr Otis said. “But he must use the oil on his chains or we must take them from him. With all that noise outside our bedrooms we just can’t sleep.”

For the next few days the house was quiet at night. Not one of the family saw the ghost. Every night Mr Otis shut the doors and windows of the library, so nothing could get in. But every morning there was the blood on the floor. Each morning Mrs Umney cleaned the floor with Washington’s bottle of Pinkerton’s. But the next day there it was again.

But each day the blood changed colour. Some mornings it was dark red, sometimes light red, sometimes a blue-red and once a very bright green. The family laughed at the changes in colour of the blood. Only little Virginia said

nothing. She wanted to cry when the blood became green.

They saw the ghost a second time on Sunday night. They were all in bed when there was a loud noise below. Mrs Otis sat up in bed. Mr Otis and his children all ran down to the library. The ghost was in a large armchair. "Oooo!" cried the ghost. "I'm hurt. My legs! My arms! Oooo!"

"Hands up," cried Mr Otis, with a gun in his hands.

With a loud cry the ghost flew through them. He put out the light in Washington's hand, and they could see nothing in the darkness. Then the ghost gave his famous unearthly cry. Again and again he cried out. The house was full of the noise of it.

At that second Mrs Otis opened the door of her bedroom.

"You don't seem very well," she said. "Here, take this bottle of Doctor Dobell's famous Water of Life. It'll be good for you."

The ghost looked at Mrs Otis. He looked at the bottle. He could not believe his ears. He started to change into a large black dog but then he heard the boys. Quickly he changed into a green light and escaped through the stone wall.

He sat in his little room. He was not pleased with Mrs Otis or the boys.

For some days after this he was very ill. He only left his room once a day. Then he went to